

18th Meeting of Black and Azov Seas Working Group (BASWG) Istanbul, Türkiye, 16-17 September 2025

Black and Azov Seas Working Group (BASWG).

Task 3.2.1.6

MBSHC - Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission and BASWG18.

High level summary

- The meeting reaffirmed the commitment of Black and Azov Sea states to active participation in IHO initiatives and acknowledged the region's unique hydrographic characteristics.
- The BASWG expressed its intent to engage with Caspian Sea states that are not yet IHO Members, aiming to integrate them more closely with the Mediterranean and Black Sea hydrographic community and to disseminate IHO best practices in hydrography, Maritime Safety Information (MSI), and nautical cartographic standards.
- Significant emphasis was placed on advancing the S-100 implementation roadmap and the development of new S-1xx product specifications.
- The working group also reported ongoing progress in achieving comprehensive utilization of the new IHO Portal for regional coordination and information sharing.

Details:

The 18th meeting of BASWG was held in Istanbul, Türkiye on 16 and 17 September 2025 in Multinational Joint Warfare Centre Command (MJWC) Seminar Hall at National Defense University Campus (Yenilevent/Beşiktaş, Istanbul), under the chairmanship of Türkiye. The meeting was attended by 18 representatives from five out of six countries of the Black and Azov Sea Region (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine). Türkiye also participated as the Chart Region F Coordinator and Spain participated as NAVAREA III coordinator. IHO Director Luigi Sinapi represented the IHO Secretariat.



18th Black and Azov Sea Working Group (BASWG) works

The BASWG Chair formally commenced the meeting by emphasizing the distinct hydrographic characteristics of the Black and Azov Sea (BAS) region and underscoring the critical requirement to adopt the S-100 standard to enhance navigational safety. The meeting agenda was structured to address member

states' national reports, review ongoing IHO Capacity Building initiatives, evaluate the status of INT charts and ENC schemes within the BAS region, and examine existing overlaps and deficiencies in ENC coverage. Additionally, considerable attention was devoted to the progress and implementation of the S-100 Roadmap.

The MBSHC Chair requested updates on each BAS member's national progress regarding S-100 implementation and encouraged the Region F Coordinator to advance the planning and development of S-1xx product specifications within the Region. Special focus was placed on the coordination of MSI, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

From the national reports the following can be highlighted:

- Bulgaria: underscored the significance of engaging in Capacity Building (CB) initiatives made available through the IHO Capacity Building Work Programme (CBWP) and the two Regional ENC Coordination Centers (RENCs) serving the MBS Region, confirming its readiness to participate. Additionally, Bulgaria announced its forthcoming status as a full member of IC-ENC.
- Georgia: provided updates on its Hydrographic Service, now operating under the Maritime Transport Agency of Georgia. The latest enhancements and renewal of means and equipment, facilitated through cooperation with KHOA, were highlighted. Georgia also acknowledged the value of CB opportunities from the IHO CBWP, RENCs, and UKHO.
- Romania: reported on new hydrographic surveys conducted in 2024 to update the national database and ENC portfolio. Romania expressed intentions to transition to a print-on-demand system for paper charts and noted the current lack of oceanographic training courses. They also emphasized the importance of geospatial support for Defense and NATO requirements, identifying cooperation with other hydrographic and oceanographic services as a crucial factor in enhancing hydrographic products and services.
- Türkiye: announced the organization of its 9th Antarctic expedition in 2025, aiming to produce charts for areas of national interest following its accession to the Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA) in 2023. Türkiye also highlighted its collaboration with IC-ENC and reaffirmed its strong commitment to the IHO CBWG as a provider of courses and training.
- Ukraine: outlined hydrographic surveys undertaken in 2024-2025 along the Danube, Dniro, and Desna rivers. The distribution of ENCs was facilitated through agreements with PRIMAR and UKHO. Ukraine positively recognized CB opportunities from IHO, IMO, and IALA. However, Ukraine also drew attention to its inability to fully meet its SOLAS obligations in its Black Sea area of responsibility, as detailed in a presentation titled *“Consequences of the destruction caused by Russian aggression”* which documented the damages inflicted by the conflict.

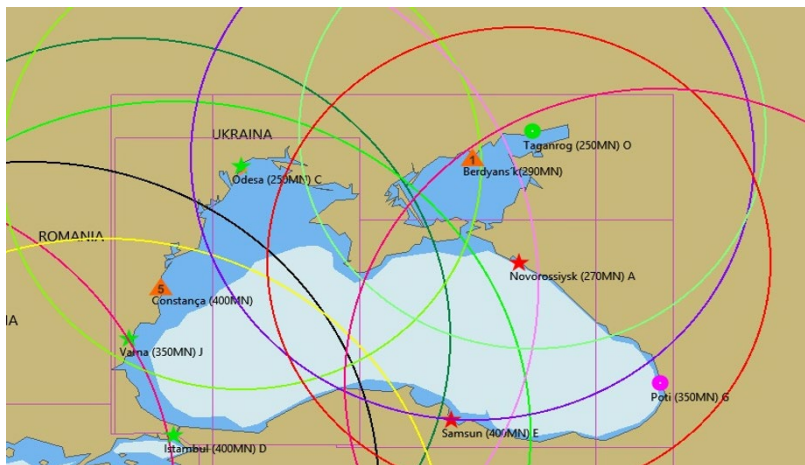
The IHO Director formally expressed appreciation to Türkiye, the Turkish Navy, and the Turkish Hydrographic Office for hosting and facilitating the meeting. He provided a detailed summary of ongoing IHO cooperation initiatives at both international and member state levels, emphasizing key achievements from the 8th IHO Council (C-8), particularly the advancement of the S-100 Roadmap, Capacity Building programs, and the ongoing revision of the IHO Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the Director delivered a technical overview of the preparatory activities for the upcoming 4th Session of the IHO Assembly. He also reported on current initiatives in the Black and Azov Sea (BAS) and adjacent Caspian Sea region, being conducted in collaboration with organizations such as IMO and IALA. The IHO Director underscored the strategic advantages for the Mediterranean and Black Sea (MBS) region – especially for BAS region – to proactively engage and include Caspian Sea states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan), which have not yet attained IHO membership. In conclusion, he reiterated the recommendation from the IRCC, encouraging the RHCs to maintain ongoing updates of their S-100 product coverage and production schedules, and to present their respective roadmap at the forthcoming WENDWG and IRCC meetings.

The Region F INT Chart Coordinator provided a technical update to the Working Group regarding the current status of INT Charts and ENCs within the Region, noting the expanded utilization of the INTOGIS platform by chart producers. The Coordinator further addressed the procedural workflow, clarifying that proposals submitted to the FICCWG will be considered approved in the absence of objections from any related members or member states, without the necessity to defer action until the subsequent MBSHC meeting. It was also recommended that proposals receiving unanimous FICCWG consensus may be subject to a formal vote by MBSHC member states through correspondence or virtual conference mechanisms.

A comprehensive S-100 Readiness assessment was delivered to BASWG participants, emphasizing the technical preparedness of IC-ENC member organizations to initiate Phase 1 S-100 product generation. The presentation delineated the following principal technical and operational challenges related to S-100 implementation:

- Concurrent management of established S-57 ENC and emergent S-101 ENC datasets, necessitating robust dual-fuel operational frameworks and seamless transition protocols.
- Attainment of requisite data maturity levels and implementation of rigorous validation mechanisms to guarantee the integrity, completeness, and reliability of S-100 datasets.
- Realization of full interoperability across heterogeneous systems and platforms, with specific reference to the S-98 interoperability specification, alongside optimization of overall system performance under operational loads.
- Establishment of formal certification pathways and the orchestration of comprehensive fleet-wide roll-out strategies for S-100-enabled systems and products.
- Development and deployment of targeted change management initiatives to address human factors, including technical training, stakeholder engagement, and organizational adaptation.
- Enhancement of inter-agency and stakeholder coordination mechanisms to ensure harmonized implementation and operational consistency.
- Securing endorsement and resource allocation from senior governmental and institutional authorities to support sustained S-100 integration.

The transition to S-100 further presents strategic opportunities, such as the implementation of multi-layered situational awareness frameworks, optimized route exchange protocols, and improvements in operational efficiency and carbon emissions reduction, even prior to the full deployment of the S-100 product suite. Accordingly, the presentation underscored the imperative to elevate awareness among national authorities regarding the urgency of the S-100 transition, to obtain enduring political and institutional commitment, and to facilitate executive engagement through high-level IHO missions. These actions are critical to demonstrating the enhanced safety, operational efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity afforded by the adoption of the S-100 standard.



Black and Azov Seas NAVTEX Stations Overview

The NAVAREA-III Coordinator presented an update on NAVTEX coverage and discussed ongoing operational challenges in the region, which remains fully serviced by active stations. He emphasized that current NAVAREA III navigational warnings are disseminated via SafetyCast (Iridium) and Safety NET II (Inmarsat). Additionally, the

Coordinator reported on the progress of S-124 implementation, stressing that MSI should not be utilized to advance political claims. He noted that the estimated timeline for issuing S-124 navigational warnings is set for 2026. The update also covered the integration with the *i-avisos* NAVAREA III software and highlighted the potential for other National coordinators to adopt *i-avisos* for their operations.

Photo:



Participants at the BASWG18 meeting

At the end of the meeting, it was unanimously agreed that Türkiye will continue as BASWG Chair, and that the next BASWG19 meeting will be held in Varna, Bulgaria in the second half of August 2026 (exact dates and venue TBD).